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ABSTRACT

Despite the growing importance of part-time faculty, staff development plans requiring them to carry equal responsibilities with full-time instructors can have negative effects. Indeed, as part-time instructors shoulder more of the burden of student advising and curriculum development, demands for equity in remuneration will result in rising costs, reduced enrollments, and fewer full- and part-time faculty positions. If this is to be avoided, part-time faculty must be viewed not as partial editions of their full-time colleagues, but as unique contributors to the educational enterprise. As such, they provide the institution with variety in programming, lower costs, new rapport between the college and the community, and an increased responsiveness to the needs of non-traditional, part-time students. Given this unique role, it is unrealistic to expect the outside professionals hired as part-time instructors to have time for or interest in negotiations concerning institutional matters beyond their immediate teaching assignment. Similarly, it is unsound to base part-time faculty remuneration on full-time criteria such as research effort and community service. While part-time faculty members deserve basic information concerning their responsibilities within the institution, colleges should, by limiting their non-instructional responsibilities, preserve the unique role of part-time instructors. (JP)

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MONOGRAPH No. 1
Part-time Faculty are Unique

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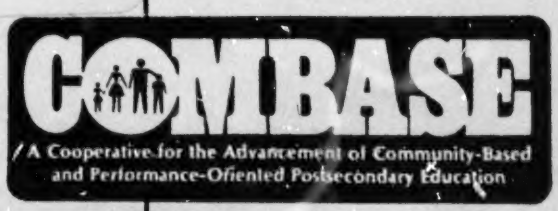

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PART-TIME FACULTY ARE UNIQUE

The numbers of part-time faculty have been steadily growing and now comprise 57 percent of total community college faculty or 120,000 individuals.[1] Moreover, the growth rate continues to spiral. Between 1973 and 1977, part-time faculty grew 88 percent at the average community college compared to one percent for full-time faculty.[2]

Many commentators focusing on the phenomenon seem to suggest that the situation is undesirable and should be set aright by making the role of part-time faculty resemble more closely that of their full-time counterparts. Development plans are being launched designed to require part-time faculty to carry equal responsibilities with full-time faculty in such activities as student advising, participation in faculty meetings and curriculum development. The more similarity of responsibility is projected for the two groups, the more equity in recompense and perquisites becomes an issue. Pressures are increasing to provide part-timers with office space, clerical assistance, staff development opportunities, and equal pay. An analysis of these trends has led John Lombardi to project that by 1985 full-timers and part-timers will receive equal pay. The consequences, he notes, are likely to be rising costs and reduced enrollments, leading to a decline in both full- and part-time faculty positions and

reduced state support.[3] This analysis does not take into account the impoverishment of program and reduced responsiveness to educational needs which will also result. We run the danger of destroying benefits for everyone if we persist in trying to treat part-time and full-time faculty according to the same standards.

A new paradigm is needed. I suggest that we look at part-time faculty, not as partial editions of full-time faculty, but as unique contributors to the educational enterprise. It took us a long time to accept the fact that part-time students were not simply "less than" full-time students. Data revealed distinctions in demographic characteristics and in educational goals. We found that part-time students are older, usually employed, often parents, with attendant family, job, and community responsibilities in addition to their educational undertakings. They demand that their education be relevant to current personal and employment needs rather than preparing them for some future participation. We have come to call them "nontraditional" students because they do not fit the traditional student profiles of young people between the ages of 18-22 in full-time residence on a college campus. Despite extensive documentation of the unique needs of these students, academia has been slow to expand its perceptions of educational needs and to respond with appropriate programs.

The new part-time faculty members are similarly unique vis-a-vis full-time faculty--and their role is not unrelated

to providing services to the nontraditional students. A model for staff development based on more accurate data about the contributions and characteristics of part-time faculty should replace that which assumes approximation to the goal of full-time, campus-bound educators working with traditional populations.

Many part-time faculty hold other jobs and teach out of special interest in the educational process or in passing on information or training recruits in their professional fields. The part-time role permits them to participate and contribute in a new way. In my experience, few of these teaching professionals have an interest in becoming full-time faculty. In our zeal to orient, develop, include in participation, and achieve equal benefits for part-time faculty, we tend to forget what they bring to their teaching without our institutional intervention.

Part-time faculty have provided us with fresh enthusiasms, variety in programming to meet student interest, lower costs, new rapport between education and the community and professional worlds from which the faculty are drawn. Will these busy professionals whom we enlist want, or be able, to spend time to be initiated to institutional concerns beyond the confines of their classes? And if they do, will we have lost much of the flexibility and high productivity which have enabled us to serve the new community college students?

Part-time faculty are most likely to be teaching part-time

students. Perhaps, because they stand a bit apart from the hallowed grounds of traditional pedagogy, part-timers often enjoy good rapport with nontraditional students, responding to them as mature individuals with experiences to share, a quality which is high on the list of androgogical principles.

We may have forgotten as we strive to develop evaluation measures to emulate those for full-time faculty that part-timers are subject to the best possible evaluation measure--students voting with their feet. Students who are seeking relevance and making sizable sacrifices to attend classes will seldom tolerate mediocre instruction. It is in keeping with the nature of part-time participation for institutions to retain the privilege of turnover based on performance.

Part-time faculty need not be burdened with the tasks of student advising. Educational continuity for students can be created by improved counseling by full-time staff who can help students to define their goals and to monitor their own progress towards them. Increased self direction on the part of students will enable them to use their faculty as resources and mentors, rather than as gate keepers.

While part-time faculty may have valuable contributions to make to curriculum developments, few will be attracted to participating in the lengthy institutional negotiations required for curricular change. Indeed, part-timers have had enormous impact on curriculum through their freedom to pioneer new courses, often demonstrating promising approaches for the institution.

Similarly, institutional and professional concerns which absorb most of the time in faculty meetings are unrewarding to professionals from other orbits. On the other hand, especially arranged discussions between full-time and part-time faculty around events in the classroom and current issues in the practice of the profession can be very productive.

No doubt, some part-timers are interested in more contact with the campus, and some are not. Inasmuch as we make service as a part-timer dependent on specialized training and institutional participation beyond the immediate teaching assignment, however, we are likely to lose many of the creative contributors which the present level of affiliation has permitted.

Part-time faculty do need good basic information about the institution, about their responsibilities, and about how their unit of instruction fits into the total academic program. This information can and should be provided through good handbooks, individual, and, when possible, group orientation sessions, newsletters, and personal follow-up. Institutions should be ready to serve part-time faculty who want and need assistance with selection of teaching materials and teaching techniques.

Fair remuneration for part-time service should be assessed for the unit of service rendered. Traditionally, salaries for full-time faculty have been deemed to represent a combination of recompense for initial training, continued scholarly updating, participation in the creation of an academic community, research

efforts, community service, student advisement, and teaching. If we juxtapose the contribution of the part-timers, we find that initial preparation and updating are occurring generally within the context of their other professional obligations. By definition, they are not a part of the academic community. They seldom engage in research or general student advising. Their service is teaching and guiding students in the context of their specialities. I submit that this is a unique function, and not a cross-section of a full-time faculty load.

Good teaching and good learning need not be confined to the traditional educational package—characterized by full-time faculty and full-time student on a campus set apart from the community—which was put together for differing clientele in a different context. Within the new community-based setting, part-time faculty contribute to the richness and flexibility of student programs and to the relatedness of theory and practice. The need for technical support for instructors and attention to continuity of educational experience for students require forceful and imaginative institutional responses. But, if these are directed primarily towards bringing part-time faculty closer to the campus model, many benefits accruing to education from their participation will be lost and pressures will mount to compensate with equal pay for equal work. If, on the other hand, the specific teaching contribution of part-timers is valued and supported as a unique dimension of community participation in the

educative process, both they and their students will benefit.

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[1]Alberta Goodman. Presentation, COMBASE Meetings 9/29/79, Austin, Texas.

[2]Barbara Guthrie Morse, "The Utilization of Part-time Faculty," Community College Frontiers, Spring 1979, p. 12.

[3]John Lombardi, Part-Time Faculty in Community Colleges. Topical Paper No. 54, ERIC Clearing House for Junior Colleges, University of California at Los Angeles, Dec. 1975, p. 83.